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Descendants and ancestors: a study of Arabic inscriptions from the Arabian Peninsula (1st-4th c. AH/7th-10th c. CE)
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Part one

Chapter One: Introduction

The Arabian Peninsula and the adjacent Levant and Mesopotamia (modern-day Jordan, Syria, Palestine, and Iraq) are home to thousands of inscriptions written in different languages and scripts, i.e. Thamudic, Nabataean, Safaitic, Hismaic, Aramaic, Dadanitic, Taymanitic, Sabaic and Arabic. These inscriptions have preserved a number of historical events before and after the advent of Islam, listing personal names, titles, dates and personal statements. However, modest their content, these inscriptions form an important historical source. Scholars have already effectively used the epigraphic record from Arabia to enlighten the history of linguistic developments,[1] scribal practices,[2] literacy[3] and political history.[4] The work on Arabic inscriptions from Islamic Arabia has, however, been much more limited and has developed much more recently. As will become clear, the field of Arabic-Islamic Arabian epigraphy is, however, very vital and dynamic with the potential to contribute greatly to linguistic, religious, political and social history.

Arabian inscriptions have fascinated observers from the time they were created up to the present day. While the historically recorded interest in Arabic inscriptions amongst Muslim scholars dates back to the medieval period,[5] this did not constitute a continuous or systematic interest, until

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[1] Ahmad Al-Jallad, *An Outline of the Grammar of the Safaitic Inscriptions* (Leiden: Brill, 2015); and see Fokelien Kootstra, "*The Writing Culture of Ancient Dadān: A Description and Quantitative Analysis of Linguistic Variation*" (PhD diss., Leiden, 2019).

[2] Fokelien Kootstra, "Scribal Practices in Contact: Two Minaic/Dadanitic Mixed Texts," in *Languages, scripts and their uses in ancient North Arabia*, in Supplement Proceedings of the Seminar for Arabian Studies (48), ed. M.C.A. Macdonald (Oxford: Archaeopress, 2018), 21–30.

[3] Michael C. A. Macdonald, "Literacy in an oral environment," in *Writing and ancient Near Eastern society, Papers in Honour of Alan R. Millard,* ed. P. Bienkowski, C.B. Mee and E.A. Slater (New York: T&t Clark2005), 49–118.

[4] Jérémie Schiettecatte and Mounir Arbach, "The political Map of Arabia and the Middle East in the Third Century AD Revealed by a Sabaean Inscription," *AAE 27* (2016): 176-196.

[5] Muslims scholars tend to record pre-Islamic and Islamic inscriptions in their work; here we mainly find three types of inscriptions constructions, graffiti and gravestones see for example: Abū ʿUbayd ʿAbd Allāh ibn ʿAbd al-ʿAzīz al-Bakrī, *Muʿjam mā istaʿjam min asmāʾ al-bilād wa-l-mawāḍiʿ*, ed. Muṣṭafā al-Saqqā (Beirut: ʿĀlam al-Kutub, 1982), 2: 606; Abū al-Faraj al-Iṣfahānī, *Adab al-Ghurabāʾ*, *The Book of Strangers*: *Medieval Arabic Graffiti on the Theme of Nostalgia*, trans. Patricia Crone and Shmuel Moreh (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2000); Muḥammad ibn Ishāq al-Fākihī, *Akhbār makka fī qadīm al-dahr wa-ḥadīthihi*, ed. ʿAbd al-Malik ibn Duhaysh (Beirut: Dār khiḍr, 1994), 2:161; Abū ʿAbd Allāh Jamāl al-Dīn Muḥammad ibn ʿAlī ibn Muḥammad al-ʿAbdarī al-Shaybī, *al-Sharaf al-*

European travelers and other visitors in the 19th century reignited the exploration of Arabian epigraphic material. Since then, European scholars started frequent missions to discover more pieces, leading to more discoveries in different parts of Arabia.[6] Indeed, Arabian material can be found in all the large museum collections around the world. In the 20th century, Saudi and other scholars from the region got involved in the scholarly study of pre-Islamic and Islamic inscriptions. Currently all archaeological surveys and excavations in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia are conducted in cooperation with the Saudi Commission for Tourism and National Heritage.[7] Materials recovered are preserved in local museums such as the national museum in Riyadh. Section 1.2 below provides an overview of the field of Arabian epigraphy focusing on Arabic inscriptions from the Islamic period and publications related to it.

The field of *Arabic* Arabian epigraphy was founded and build by scholars from Saudi Arabia and other scholars from the region starting in the second half of the 20th century. In this relatively new field of Arabian epigraphy, systematic research of the inscriptions is lagging behind the rate at which new inscriptions are found. As a result, many inscriptions are waiting to be further inspected and the field is still evolving as a discipline adapting and changing its methodologies along the way. The aim of this thesis is twofold. First of all I will map the history of the field and describe its current state. Additionally I will focus on methodological questions and how these inscriptions can be researched through a systematic approach. To demonstrate this methodology, I will focus

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aʿlā fī dhikr qubūr maqbarat bāb al-muʿallā, ed. al-Sharīf Manṣūr Ṣāliḥ Abū Rayyāsh (Mecca: al-Asadi 2000), 66-112; Najm al-Dīn ʿUmar Ibn Fahd al-Makkī, *al-Durr al-kamīn bi-dhayl al-ʿiqd al-thamīn fī taʾrīkh al-balad al-amīn,* ed. ʿAbd al-Malik ibn Duhaysh (Beirut: Dār khiḍr, 2000), 1: 100 and 137. Ibrāhīm al-Ḥarbī, *Kitāb al-manāsik wa-amākin ṭuruq al-ḥajj wa-maʿālim al-jazīra al-ʿarabiyya*, ed. Ḥamad al-Jāsir (Riyad: al-Yamāma, 1969), 386-395.

[6] See the history of these expeditions in Adolf Grohmann, *Expédition Philby- Ryckmans- Lippens en Arabie - Arabic inscriptions* (Leuven, 1962), X-XIX.

[7] According to the official website of the Saudi Commission for Tourism and National Heritage, there are currently 44 local and international archaeological and epigraphic missions active in different areas in Saudi Arabia: SCTH, accessed October 10, 2018, https://scth.gov.sa/MediaCenter/News/GeneralNews/Pages/z-g-1-10-10-2018.aspx, On top of this a large number of PhD and MA students' theses have been and are being written on these inscriptions.

on a particular corpus of inscriptions found at different sites within Saudi Arabia which are connected to members from four families that claimed descendance from the companions of the Prophet. These inscriptions can teach us about how people chose to 'document' themselves. So that brings us to the second main goal of the thesis which is to present a full edition and translation of 260 Arabic graffiti, epitaphs and monumental inscriptions, of which 115 were already published before, and 145 consist of yet unpublished graffiti. I will start here with introducing the field of Arabic epigraphy leading up to my research questions which will be discussed in more depth in section 1.3. from this chapter.

In general, it is commonly assumed that all Arabic inscriptions – that is to say, texts written in the Arabic language and script – date from the seventh century onwards and that from that date exclusively Arabic inscriptions were produced. However, to give just one example, there is a bilingual text from Najrān, dated to the 3rd/9th century, which is written in both Musnad and Arabic scripts.[8] Owing to the fact that most inscriptions are not dated, it is often difficult to place them with certainty in the 1st/7th century or before that date. The assumption, however, that there are only Arabic inscriptions from the Islamic period and that all non-Arabic inscriptions should be given a pre-Islamic date is too simplistic. While scholars have already known for a while, that Arabic writings in other scrips exist,[9] more recently a still growing number of Arabic-script inscriptions that date from before the rise of Islam, are being discovered.[10] There is, moreover, a

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[8] It is a short text found in Najrān with one name written in Musnad and two in Arabic, followed by a short prayer, Said al-Said, "Early South Arabian-Islamic Bilingual inscriptions from Najrān," *AAE* 15, no. 1 (2004): 84-88.

[9] See about the language of Safaitic in Al-Jallad, *An Outline,* 10-17, and Arabic in Greek inscriptions for example see Ahmad Al-Jallad and Ali al-Manaser, "New Epigraphica from Jordan I: a pre-Islamic Arabic Inscription in Greek letters and a Greek Inscription from northeastern Jordan," *AEN* 1(2015): 51–70.

[10] Christian Robin et al, "Inscriptions antiques de la région de Najrān (Arabie Séoudite méridionale): nouveaux jalons pour l'histoire de L'écriture, de la langue et du calendrier arabes," *Comptes Rendusde l'Académie des Inscriptions et Belles-Lettres*, (July-October 2014): 1033-1128; Laïla Nehmé. "New Dated Inscriptions (Nabataean and Pre-Islamic Arabic) from a Site Near Al-Jawf, Ancient Dūmah, Saudi Arabia," *AEN* 3 (2017): 121–164.

constant updating of the material of Arabic epigraphy as more and more inscriptions continue to be discovered and scholarly insights advance.[11]

Although writing in the Arabic script began before the rise of Islam, no Arabic Islamic inscription was ever published until 1939, the year in which Hamidullah was the first one to do so.[12] Nevertheless, the field has seen something of an explosion in the last three decades. This increased interest has several reasons. First, a raised awareness of its archaeological heritage in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia has driven scholarly and public interest in Arabic-Islamic inscriptions. As a result, the activities of the Saudi archaeological missions, often in cooperation with foreign institutions, have led to massive discoveries of valuable new material.[13] Secondly, social media has greatly contributed to spreading new inscriptions fast and far increasing accessibility and impact in and outside the academy. The widespread presence of smartphones is offering their owners cameras to take pictures of the inscriptions, GPS features to locate them, and instant access to the internet to share them via social media. Photographs of newly discovered inscriptions often circulate on Twitter, Facebook, or public websites before they enter the academic domain via publications and editions. Finally, a continued interest in the earliest history of Islam and the scarcity of contemporary narrative sources such as histories, motivates scholars to look for historical sources to enlighten and supplement historical accounts preserved in later narrative sources.[14] The inscriptions offer an important independent historical source. In a recent study, Imbert stated that nearly 85% of dated graffiti from 1st/7th-8th century come from Saudi Arabia, with the rest coming

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[11] Maysāʾ bt. ʿAli ibn Ibrahim Ghabban, "*al-Kitābāt al-islāmiyya al-mubakkira fī haḍbat ḥismā bi-minṭaqat tabūk: dirāsa taḥlīliyya āthāriyya wa-lughawiyya*" (PhD diss., King Saud University, 2016-2017).

[12] Mohammad Hamidullah, "Some Arabic Inscriptions of Medinah of the Early Years of Hijrah," *Islamic Culture* 11 (1939): 427-439.

[13] See about these missions in Atlal journal.

[14] Patricia Crone and Michael Cook, *Hagarism: The Making of the Islamic World* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1977).

from Syria, Palestine, Jordan, and Iraq.[15] With new inscriptions being discovered daily, they extend further and further into history. Recently, two inscriptions were discovered in al-ʿUlā and Najrān dating to the year 17/638-639 and 28/648-649 respectively.[16] In Appendix One, I list all dated inscriptions from the first 50 years of the Hijra.

With the surge in newly discovered, very early Arabic inscriptions mentioning mostly anonymous, but also well-known historical figures from Islam's earliest history, questions have been raised concerning the authenticity of these inscriptions.[17] There are several reasons to assume, however, that this material is indeed historical and should be associated with the individuals mentioned in them. First of all, the historicity of the inscriptions is confirmed by their materiality. It is easy to identify these writings as ancient rather than modern reproductions, due to the wear and tear on the incisions in the rock. Experiments have proved that it is rather difficult and time-consuming to prepare a piece of a rock that remains *in situ* to resemble one that has been subjected to half a century of weather circumstances.[18]

Another argument against the idea that these inscriptions are the product of modern-day efforts, is the presence of names of particular family members for whom any literary records are lacking. In other words, the inscriptions contain names of individuals belonging to families that are discussed in the literary sources, but these individual family members, are not necessarily mentioned in the literary sources. Related to that, one wonders whether these inscriptions mentioning merely names

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[15] Frédéric Imbert, "*L'Islam des pierres Graffiti arabes des deux premiers siècles de l'Hégire (VIIᵉ–IXᵉ siècles) Corpus et premières analyses*" (Pour l'Habilitation à Diriger des Recherches, Aix-Marseille University, 2011), 2: 37-38.
[16] ʿAbd Allāh Āl Shaybān, "Najrān: al-ʿuthūr ʿalā thānī aqdam naqsh atharī fī al-jazīra al-ʿarabiyya", April 13, 2012, *al-Sharq al-Awsaṭ*,
http://archive.aawsat.com/details.asp?section=43&article=672426&issueno=12190#.W1muFk1lJ9A.
[17] Recently, G. Adi discussed the authenticity of the early Arabic inscription in his M.A thesis. I have indicated where his arguments overlap with my idea in the footnote, below.
[18] G. Adi, "*Identifying Individuals in Early Islamic Graffiti: A Methodological Framework*" (MA thesis, University of Edinburgh, 2017), 31.

and sometimes, a short prayer would be the kind of texts that would be faked by a contemporary fraud. One would expect such a fraud instead to produce longer texts providing extensive details about land ownership, historical events, and generally more elaborate titles, eulogies, and other information. In Chapter Five, section 5.2 we will describe that inscribing something in stone, is in fact not easy even today. This would be a lot of effort to produce un spectacular short texts. Moreover, it seems to be difficult to fake a corpus of multiple inscriptions related to one family or a group of people in one site. As we will see in this dissertation, some sites have more than twenty graffiti related to one family.

Another aspect of the inscriptions we discuss here, concerns the identification of the persons mentioned in them. For example, as we will see in Chapter Two, section 2.5.2, we can ask ourselves why the ʿUmar son of al-Khaṭṭāb mentioned in an inscription is to be identified as the famous caliph of that name. Could there not have lived more than one person that went by that name? While this possibility can never be entirely excluded, there are indicators that help identify these individuals and make it more likely that indeed the famous names mentioned, refer to the famous people from literary sources that we know under those names. The first method that helps to identify individuals in a particular inscription is to focus on the people mentioned in surrounding graffiti, which helps to exclude certain possibilities as will be discussed in Chapter Two, section 2.2.1.

Secondly, we can assume that it is more likely that people would claim they were the descendants of a well-known individual, especially if they list his name two or more generations later, as we find grandsons and great-grandsons do in our inscriptions. That is to say, the famous descendants who appear in the genealogies of individuals two or more generations later, are likely to be referring to the historical figures of those names, as that is exactly why these famous ancestors are

mentioned. Whether the individuals who list such genealogies are correct in claiming descent from these famous ancestors is, of course, another story.

Before we turn to a review of the study of and literature on Arabian inscriptions, we will examine how scholars specializing in epigraphy have categorized inscriptions through their language, script, or the genre of the writing. The discussion will be limited to the inscriptions from the Islamic period and originating in the Peninsula as well as adjacent Jordan, Syria, Egypt, and Palestine.[19]

1.1. Terminology and methodology in Eastern and Western academia

Modern scholars use different definitions and terms in their studies of Arabic inscriptions from the Islamic period. In most cases, they do not justify their use of specific terminologies or what selection criteria they applied in their work, although some observations can be made on the basis of their publications. For instance, a philological, linguistic and script focus becomes clear in a number of publications that identify the corpus under study as "Arabic."[20] Obviously, the label 'Arabic' allows for the inclusion of non-Islamic inscriptions, such as those pre-dating the rise of Islam, as well as Christian Arabic ones. Although the number of known Christian-Arabic inscriptions has grown substantially over the last years, the majority of Arabic inscriptions from Arabia are left by Muslims, which we can derive from the names and formulas that appear in the inscriptions.[21]

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[19] Generally, the same remarks apply to Islamic-period inscriptions from other areas of the Muslim empire.

[20]. Max Van Berchem, *Matériaux pour un corpus inscriptionum Arabicarum, Deuxième partie, Syrie, du Sud. Tome deuxième, Jérusalem (*(*Ville*)*)* (Cairo: Imprimerie de l'Institut Français d'Archéologie Orientale, 1922); Hamidullah, "Some Arabic,"; Enno Littmann, *Arabic Inscriptions, Syria Publication of the Princeton University Archaeological Expedition to Syria in 1904-5 and 1909, Division IV Semitic Inscriptions, section D* (Leyden E. J.: Brill, 1949); Grohmann, *Expédition Philby- Ryckmans- Lippens*, Fred M. Donner "Some Early Arabic inscriptions from Al-Ḥanākiyya, Saudi Arabia," *JNES* 43, no. 3 (1984): 181-208. Moshe Sharon, *Corpus inscriptionum Arabicarum Palaestinae* (Leiden: Brill, 1997); Nāṣir ibn ʿAlī al-Ḥārithī, *al-Nuqūsh al-ʿarabiyya al-mubakkira fī muḥāfaẓat al-ṭāʾif* (Ṭāʾif: Dār al-Ḥārithī, 1997); ʿAbd Allāh Muḥammad al-Munīf, "Naqshān ʿarbiyyān min wādī ḥajar sharq muḥāfaẓat al-ʿulā," *Majallat al-Dāra* 22, no. 3 (1996): 145-162.

[21] There is indeed now a rather substantial corpus of Christian-Arabic inscriptions – most recently a graffito from Jordan thought to be dated to the reign of the caliph Yazīd I (r. 60-64/680-683) was published. See Younis al-Shdaifat et al., "An early Christian Arabic graffito mentioning 'Yazīd the king'," *AAE* 28, no 2 (2017): 315- 324; another one

The label 'Islamic' inscription is used predominantly among Arab scholars to indicate a more content-based approach.[22] Some scholars use both terms to provide a comprehensive description of the inscriptions in terms of the language and the content.[23] Another way to combine the two terms is in a publication that describes the corpus as 'Arabic writings on Islamic archaeological remains'.[24]

It is worth mentioning that some scholars use the term "Kufic" to signify the type of script.[25] Although the writing of the early Arabic inscriptions can definitely be characterized as 'angular' (as opposed to cursive), the identification of Kufic is problematic, because the shapes of the letters

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was found in Iraq; see ʿĀmir ʿAbd Allāh al-Jamilī, "Naqsh ʿarabī lī-tamīma min al-ḥīra li-ʿabd al-masīḥ ibn baqīla al-ghassānī min al-qarn al-awwal al-hijrī," *Majallat al-Siyāḥa wa-l-Āthār* 28, no. 1 (2016): 23-28; Saba Farès, "Christian Monasticism on the Eve of Islam: Kilwa (Saudi Arabia) New Evidence," *AAE* 22, no. 2 (2011): 243-252, two inscriptions were found in Syria and Saudi Arabia; see Robert G. Hoyland, "Two New Arabic Inscriptions: Arabian Castles and Christianity in the Umayyad period," in *To the Madbar and Back Again: Studies in the Languages, Archaeology, and Cultures of Arabia Dedicated to Michael C. A. Macdonald*, ed. Laïla Nehmé and Ahmad Al-Jallad (Leiden/ Boston: Brill, 2017), 327–338. For inscriptions in Egypt, see Mutsuo Kawatoko et al., *Ancient and Islamic Rock inscriptions of South Sinai* (Tokyo: Middle Eastern Culture Center in Japan, Tokyo University of Foreign Studies, 2006). Four inscriptions have been discovered in Udhruḥ, in Jordan, dating to the 7th-8th/14th-15th century. See Zeyad al-Salameen et al., "New Arabic-Christian inscriptions from Udhruḥ Southern Jordan." *AAE* 22, no 2 (2011): 232-242.

[22] H. M. El-Hawary, "The most ancient Islamic monument known Dated A.H. 31 (AD 652) From the Time of the Third Calif ʿUthman." *JRAS* 62, no. 2 (1930): 321-333. George C. Miles, "Early Islamic inscriptions Near Ṭāʾif in the Ḥijāz," *JNES* 7, no. 4 (1948): 236-242.; Saad A. al-Rashid, *Kitābāt islāmiyya min makka al-mukarrama dirāsa wa-taḥqīq* (Riyadh: Maktabat al-Malik Fahd al-Waṭaniyya, 1995); Moshalleh K al-Moraekhi, "*A Critical and Analytical Study of some Early Islamic Inscriptions from Medina in the Ḥijāz, Saudi Arabia*" (PhD diss., University of Manchester, 1995); Ḥayāt bt ʿAbd Allāh Ḥusayn al-Kilābī, *al-Nuqūsh al-islāmiyya ʿalā ṭarīq al-ḥajj al-shāmī bi-shamāl gharb al-mamlaka al-ʿarabiyya al-saʿūdiyya: min al-qarn al-awwal ilā al-qarn al-khāmis al-hijrī* (Riyadh: Maktabat al-Malik Fahd al-Waṭaniyya, 2009).

[23] ʿAdnān al-Banī, "al-Kitābāt al-ʿarabiyya al-islāmiyya fī maʿbad baʿal fī tadmur," *al-ʿUṣūr* 4, no.1 (1989): 115-129, and see Najāḥ Fatḥī Rajab Abū Sāra, "*al-Nuqūsh al-ʿarabiyya al-islāmiyya fī khalīl al-raḥmān*" (MA thesis, The Univerity of Jordan, 1993).

[24] ʿAbd Allāh Aḥmad al-Khrashīāt, "*al-Kitābāt al-ʿarabiyya ʿalā al-āthār al-islāmiyya fī bilād al-shām fī al-fatratayn al-umawiyya wa-l-ʿabbāsiyya*" (MA thesis, the University of Jordan, 1997).

[25] Mohammad A. S. al-Salook, "*Analytical and Palaeographic Study of some Early Kufic Inscriptions from Saudi Arabia*" (MA thesis, Durham University, 1988); Aḥmad ʿUmar al-Zaylaʿī, "Aḍwāʾ jadīda ʿalā taʾrīkh al-usra al-Mūsawiyya min khilāl thalāthat nuqūsh kūfiyya min mawqiʿ al-Sirrayn al-ātharī janūb makka al-mukarrama," *al-ʿUṣūr* 6, no 1 (1991): 169-189; Ilkka Lindstedt, "New Kufic Graffiti and Inscriptions from Jordan," *AAE* 25, no. 1 (2014): 110-114.

are hardly consistent and cannot be identified as the highly stylized Kufic script as described in detail by Ibn Muqla (d. 328/939).[26]

In brief, Islamic-period inscriptions from Arabia are over-all written in Arabic but could be either Islamic or Christian. However, the majority of these inscriptions are known to have been produced by Muslims. In this dissertation, I use the term 'Arabic' to describe the inscriptions. However, I am interested in more than the linguistic and orthographic features of the inscriptions.

1.2. Arabic epigraphy: an overview of the history of the field

The number of publications that present editions of Arabic inscriptions from Saudi Arabia has been increasing steadily throughout the last decades. Many of the more recent publications include or focus entirely on the so-called graffiti. This is in contrast to earlier publications which targeted solely monumental and constructions' inscriptions, thereby mostly ignoring more informal and private texts. An incentive to publish inscriptions has been the presence of an absolute dating, and several of such dated inscriptions have been published in stand-alone articles. The first dated Arabic inscription was published in 1948. It was discovered in Ṭāʾif and dates to 58/677-678. It mentions the caliph Muʿāwiya (r. 41-60/661-680).[27] Since then many more have come to light. By increasing the corpus of Arabic epigraphic material, all these editions are very valuable, and their sheer number is having an important impact on the field. This growing corpus of edited Arabic inscriptions is now being used in more synthetic studies of different kinds. Before I discuss the different ways in which the inscriptions have been used in historical studies, I will give an overview of the editions of inscriptions from Islamic Arabia that have been produced so far.

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[26] Geoffrey Khan, *Arabic Papyri. Selected Material from the Khalili Collections* (Oxford: The Nour Foundation in association with Azimuth Editions and Oxford University Press, 1992), 1: 44-46.
[27] Miles, "Early Islamic," 236-242.

Since the start of official surveys in the Kingdom in 1976, vast numbers of unpublished inscriptions have been recorded from different regions in Saudi Arabia. This important work which commenced with the establishment of the "Department of Antiquities and Museums" now renamed as the "Saudi Commission for Tourism and National Heritage" is reported on annually in the journal *Atlal*. The reports show that a massive amount of texts has been collected, but many of them have not yet been published.[28] For example, during the epigraphic surveys between 1984 and 1986, over 1,300 Arabic texts were recorded, but only 20 texts were subsequently published in *Atlal*.[29] Additionally, in several cases material that was being prepared for publication was ultimately not published because of the untimely death of the scholar who discovered the inscriptions and had intended to publish them. See for example the inscriptions that al-Ḥārithī collected in Mecca and Ṭāʾif.[30] The Japanese scholar Mutsuo Kawatoko, who passed away recently, had gathered 511 Arabic graffiti during a survey in the Medina region.[31]

When discussing the history of the field of Arabic epigraphy from Arabia, it is not possible to do so without touching upon the work of Saad al-Rashid. Although there had been a limited number of Arabic inscriptions from Arabia published before al-Rashid became active,[32] he is truly the founder of the field in Saudi Arabia since 1978. Through his productivity, his methodology and the geographical and chronological breadth of his work, he made uniquely important contributions

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[28] The first report of this surveys is Ahmad H. Sharafaddin, "Some Islamic Inscriptions Discovered in Darb Zubayda," *Atlal* 1 (1977): 69-70.

[29] In 1984, 759 Kufic inscriptions were found. Only 6 were published by A. Livingstone et al., "Epigraphic Survey, 1404-1984," *Atlal* 9 (1985): 135. In 1985, 328 inscriptions were found. See Majeed Khan et al., "Preliminary Report on the Second Phase of Comprehensive Rock Art and Epigraphic Survey of Northern province 1405-1985," *Atlal* 10 (1986): 82-93. And in 1986, 284 graffiti were found by Majeed Khan et al., "Preliminary Report on the Third phase of Rock Art Epigraphic Survey of Northern Region of Saudi Arabia 1986-1406 AH," *Atlal* 11 (1988): 61-75.

[30] al-Ḥārithī, *al-Nuqūsh al-ʿarabiyya*, 21 note 2.

[31] Mutsuo Kawatoko, "Archaeological Survey of Najrān and Madinah," *Atlal* 18 (2005): 45-59.

[32] Hamidullah, "Some Arabic,"427-439; Othman Rostem, "Rock inscriptions in the Higaz," *Supplément aux Annales du Service des Antiquités de l'Égypte* 8 (1948): 1-29, and ʿAbd al-Quddūs al-Anṣārī, *Bayna al-āthār wa-l-taʾrīkh* (Jeddah: Maṭābiʿ al-Rawḍa, 1977).

to the field as will become clear from the discussion below; virtually all places where inscriptions were found and all periods in which inscriptions were manufactured, are already mentioned in the work of Al-Rashid. He has published many known inscriptions, and has done important work on Arabian archaeology. He completed his PhD at Leeds University in 1978. He taught at King Saud University and trained many students. From 1996-2000 he served as an assistant Deputy minister of Antiquities and Museums in the Ministry of Knowledge; later from 2000-2007 he became Deputy minister of the Antiquities and Museums in the same ministry. He also served as advisor to the president of the Saudi Commission for Tourism and National Heritage from 2007-2018.

He was the first scholar to apply an inclusive research strategy where coins, pottery, inscriptions and narrative text are studied in combination with Arabic Epigraphy, leading to big breakthroughs in the field. He applied this method very successfully in his major work, *Darb Zubaydah: the Pilgrim Road from Kufa to Mecca*,[33] in which he followed the famous pilgrimage route from the Saudi-Iraqi border to Mecca. In his descriptions he discusses facilities such as the way stations and watering places, as well as more detailed elements such as pavements, coins, and inscriptions that he found along the way at specific sites.[34] Al-Rashid applied a similar approach, combining archaeological material and inscriptions in his other major book, that on the city of *al-Rabadhah*.[35] Since al-Rashid's publication on the Darb Zubaydah, additional surveys have led to the discovery of new inscriptions along the different pilgrimage routes to Mecca. ʿAli Ghabban followed the *ḥajj* route in the north-west region of Saudi Arabia and al-Thenyian did the same for the Yemen *ḥajj*

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[33]Saad A. al-Rashid, *Darb Zubaydah* (Riyadh: Riyadh University Library, 1980), he also translated to Arabic see *Darb zubayda ṭarīq al-ḥajj min al-kūfa ilā makka al-mukarrama: dirāsa taʾrīkhiyya wa-ḥaḍāriyya athariyya* (Riyadh: Dār al-Waṭan, 1993).
[34] Ibid., 121.
[35] Saad A. al-Rashid, *Al-Rabadhah Portrait of Early Islamic Civilization in Saudi Arabia* (Riyadh: King Saud University, 1986), 85-91. See by the same author, "Nuqūsh islāmiyya jadīda min al-madīna al-munawwara," in *Mudāwalāt al-liqāʾ al-ʿilmī al-sanawī al-rābiʿ li-jamʿiyyat al-taʾrīkh wa-l-āthār: duwal majlis al-taʿāwun li-duwal al-khalīj al-ʿarabiyya ʿabra al-ʿuṣūr*, (2002), 117-153.

route.[36] ʿAli Ghabban was the first researcher to visit the site of Abū ʿŪd, and he proved that the site was previously known as Fuwayq mentioned by Ibn Faḍl Allāh al-ʿUmarī (d. 749 /1349) in his book *Masālik al-abṣār fī mamālik al-amṣār*.[37] In his article Ghabban published 25 graffiti, six of which are referenced and analyzed in this dissertation.[38] Later on, al-Kilābī visited this site during her PhD fieldwork, collecting a total of 300 inscriptions from the pilgrimage road in the north-west of Saudi Arabia.[39]

Al-Rashid was also active in the Medina region. He published three important books on this region, the first one of which is *Kitābāt islāmiyya ghayr manshūra min ruwāwa al-madīna al-munawwara*, published in 1993. In this book al-Rashid included editions of 55 graffiti from around Medina along the (*ghadīr*) rivulet Ruwāwa, dating to 1st-3rd/7th-9th centuries.[40] He added that this site boasts many more graffiti that have yet to be formally analyzed. Indeed, since then, approximately 255 additional graffiti have been located in this area.[41] In addition, al-Rashid's editions have been revised since the first publication of the *Ruwāwa* inscriptions. Imbert revised the date on one of the inscriptions to read 96/714-715 instead of 76/695-696.[42] I have corrected the readings of some of the personal names of the Medina inhabitants (see my list of corrections on edited texts in Appendix Two). Following al-Rashid's work at Ruwāwa, the Saudi Commission sent two missions

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[36] ʿAli Ibrahim Ghabban, *Les deux routes Syriennes de pèlerinage au Nord-Ouest de l'Arabie Saoudite* (Cairo: Institut Français d'Archéologie Orientale, 2011), 2, 495-591; Mohammad A. al-Thenyian, "*An Archaeological Study of the Yemeni Highland Pilgrim Route Between Ṣanʿaʾ and Mecca*"(PhD diss., Durham University,1993).

[37] Aḥmad ibn Yaḥyā ibn Faḍl Allāh al-ʿUmarī, *Masālik al-abṣār fī mamālik al-amṣār*, ed. Kāmil Salmān al-Jubūrī and Mahdī al-Najim (Beirut: Dār al-kutub al-ʿIlmiyya, 2010), 2: 343-345.

[38] ʿAli Ibrahim Ghabban, "Fuwayq mawrid ʿalā ṭarīq al-ḥajj al-shāmī "dirāsa fī taḥqīq mawqiʿuhu wa-ʿalāqaithi bi-l-ṭariq"," in *Mudāwalāt al-liqāʾ al-ʿilmī al-sanawī al-thālith li-jamʿiyyat al-taʾrīkh wa-l-āthār: duwal majlis al-taʿāwun li-duwal al-khalīj al-ʿarabiyya ʿabra al-ʿuṣūr*, (2001), 155-217.

[39] al-Kilābī, *al-Nuqūsh al-islāmiyya*.

[40] *dirāsa wa-taḥqīq* (Riyadh: Dār al-Waṭan, 1993), 13.

[41] In a report by ʿAwaḍ al-Zahrānī et al., "Taqrīr mabdʾī ʿan aʿmāl al-masḥ al-atharī bi-minṭaqat al-madīna al-munawwara li-ʿām 1420AH/1999CE," *Atlal* 17 (2002):71-104 of the Saudi commission mentions that 255 additional inscriptions were located and recorded, see Khālid ibn Muḥammad Askūbī et al., "al-Musūḥāt al-athariyya fī wādī al-ʿaqīq janūb al-madīna al-munawwara, 1422AH," *Atlal* 19 (2006): 96.

[42] al-Rashid, *Kitābāt islāmiyya ghayr*, 83-86, for the correction, see Imbert, "*L'Islam des pierres*," 1: 80-81.

to the site. The first mission was led by al-Zahrānī in 1999,[43] and the second one by Askūbī in 2002.[44]

At the beginning of this century al-Rashid published his second book on the Medina region *Dirāsāt fī al-āthār al-islāmiyya al-mubakkira bi-l-madīna al-munawwara* where he discussed inscriptions from different sites near Medina.[45] Al-Rashid's third book regarding this region is *al-Ṣuwaydira.* In it he explored the archaeological remains and Arabic inscriptions from this site.[46] Using historical information, I was able to offer a radical revision of a group of 11 inscriptions that al-Rashid published in his two books *Dirāsāt* and *al-Ṣuwaydira*. In Appendix Two I list all the inscriptions that I have corrected.

The archeological site al-Ṣuwaydira was originally discovered by ʿAbd al-Quddūs al-Anṣārī (d. 1983), who was the first visitor to al-Ṣuwaydira and who published a book about the sites he visited in the region of Medina and other sites in Saudi Arabia. He discovered a few inscriptions on the site of al-Ṣuwaydira, and one of them was related to a person he identified as al-Qāsim, son of Muḥammad son of Abū ʿĪsā.[47] Al-Rashid accepted the reading of the last name as Abū ʿĪsā.[48] Subsequently, Khālid Askūbī and his team, who led the Saudi mission in the north-eastern part of Medina, identified an additional inscription related to a member of the same family, continuously reading the last name as Abū ʿĪsā.[49] The letter shape of the last letter suggests that the reading

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[43] al-Zahrānī et al., "Taqrīr mabdʾī," 71.
[44] Askūbī et al., "al-Musūḥāt al-athariyya fī," 95.
[45] Saad A. al-Rashid, (Riyadh: Muʾassasat al-Huzaymī lil-Tijāra wa-l-Tawkīlāt, 2000), 115.
[46] Saad A. al-Rashid, *al-Ṣuwaydira (al-ṭaraf qadīman): āthāruhā wa-nuqūshuhā al-islāmiyya* (Riyadh: Layan Culture Foundation, 2009).
[47] He visited the site for a few hours; al-Anṣārī, *Bayna al-āthār*, 138.
[48] al-Rashid, al-Rashid, *Dirāsāt fī al-āthār*, 115, also in his second book *al-Ṣuwaydira (al-ṭaraf qadīman)*, 104,105,106, 152,158,215, 288, 307 and 342.
[49] Khālid Askūbī et al., "al-Musūḥāt al-athariyya shamāl sharq al-madīna al-munawwara mawsim ʿām 1428AH/2008CE," *Atlal* 22 (2012): 110-123.

should be Abū ʿAbs not Abū ʿĪsā, and as I will discuss below in Chapter Three, section 3.6, I was able to reinterpret these inscriptions as referring to the famous Medinan Abū ʿAbs family.

Because of a long-standing interest in the early history of Islam, the epigraphic records from the places that played a central role in the rise of Islam, namely Mecca and Medina, have received relatively more attention. However, access to these places is confined to Muslims. In practice, moreover, it is quite hard for non-Saudi scholars to obtain permission to do research at these sites. So even though these sites were the places where the recording of inscriptions first started, up to this day the systematic surveying of these sites has not been completed. As mentioned above Hamidullah was the first to publish inscriptions from Medina, followed by a report of Rostom in 1948 [50] and Māhir who published constructions' inscriptions from Mecca in 1978.[51]

Apart from his before-mentioned work, Al-Rashid also published editions of texts found in Mecca, notably *Kitābāt islāmiyya min makka al-mukarrama*, in which he published 60 graffiti.[52] Nāṣir al-Ḥārithī studied the regions of Ṭāʾif and Mecca together through archaeological surveys, and conducted an examination of the epigraphic material. Al-Ḥārithī published a number of books and articles with editions of graffiti, gravestones, and studies of constructions dating between the 1st-5th/7th-11th centuries.[53] After al-Ḥārithī's death, no additional epigraphic material has come from the area of Mecca and Ṭāʾif, and neither from the remains of the gravestones of al-Muʿallā.

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[50] Othamn Rostom visited the area of Medina and published his report, Rostem, "Rock inscriptions," 1-29.

[51] Suʿād Māhir, "Baʿḍ al-kitābāt al-tadhkāriyya fī al-ʿaṣr al-ʿabbāsī bi-makka al-mukarrama," *Majallat al-Dāra* 4, no. 2 (1978): 47-65.

[52] al-Rashid, *Kitābāt islāmiyya min makka*, 194.

[53] Nāṣir ibn ʿAlī al-Ḥārithī, "Naqsh kitābī nādir yuʾarrikhu ʿimārat al-khalīfa al-umawī ʿabd al-malik ibn marwān lil-masjid al-ḥarām ʿām 78AH," *ʿĀlam al-Makhṭūṭāt wa-l-Nawādir* 12, no. 2 (August 2007): 533–543; "Muktashafāt athariyya jadīda min makka al-mukarrama wa-l-ṭaīf," in *Mudāwalāt al-liqāʾ al-ʿilmī al-sanawī al-thānī li-jamʿiyyat al-taʾrīkh wa-l-āthār: duwal majlis al-taʿāwun li-duwal al-khalīj al-ʿarabiyya ʿabra al-ʿuṣūr*, (2000), 81-160; "Nuqūsh islāmiyya min ʿarafāt," in *Mudāwalāt al-liqāʾ al-ʿilmī al-sanawī al-thālith li-jamʿiyyat al-taʾrīkh wa-l-āthār: duwal majlis al-taʿāwun li-duwal al-khalīj al-ʿarabiyya ʿabra al-ʿuṣūr*, (2001), 219-264. "Shāhd qabr min maqbarat al-muʿallā yuʾarrikhu li-mutawaffāt min usrat al-ṣaḥābī al-jalīl ʿamr ibn al-ʿāṣ," *ʿĀlam al-Makhṭūṭāt wa-l-Nawādir* 7, no. 1 (March- August 2002): 234-250. "Nuqūsh islāmiyya mubakkira min ḥimā al-nimūr shamāl gharb al-ṭāʾif," in *Mudāwalāt al-liqāʾ al-ʿilmī al-sanawī al-thālith li-jamʿiyyat al-taʾrīkh wa-l-āthār: duwal majlis al-taʿāwun li-duwal*

Another important work about the inscriptions from Medina is al-Moraekhi's 1995 thesis, entitled: "*A Critical and Analytical study of Some Early Islamic Inscriptions from Medina in the Ḥijāz, Saudi Arabia.*"[54] Al-Moraekhi edited 90 graffiti and 10 tombstones from Medina in his dissertation. Al-Moraekhi's work mostly consists of an analysis of the formula and the shapes of the letters. He identified a total of 43 tombstones in the Medina museum,[55] only 10 of which he has published in this work. I will use 4 of these gravestones in my dissertation.[56] It must be noted, however, that when I visited the Museum of Medina in January 2017 and January 2018, only a selection of these tombstones identified by al-Moraekhi was available for public viewing, unfortunately the gravestones I will use in this dissertation were not on display in the museum so I will have to use al-Moraekhi's photos and facsimiles as my main source.

Scholars visited other regions on the Peninsula to record inscriptions as well. I have already discussed al-Rashid's work and that of scholars after him on the inscriptions from the pilgrimage routes and other sites in the Medina region. In addition, al-Rashid published a corpus of early Arabic inscriptions from the region of ʿAsīr.[57] In his PhD thesis, al-Zaylaʿī presented 78 editions of gravestones from Southern Mecca.[58] Khalīl al-Muaikel studied the archaeology and epigraphy of the area of al-Jawf in the north of Arabia, and he subsequently published 46 inscriptions.[59]

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al-khalīj al-ʿarabiyya ʿabra al-ʿuṣūr, (2002), 285-345; *Aḥjār shāhidiyya min matḥaf āthār wa-l-turāth bi-makka al-mukarrama qirāʾa wa-nashr* (Riyadh: Dār al-Hilāl, 2005); *Aḥjār shāhidiyya ghayr manshūra min matḥaf al-āthār wa-l-turāth bi-makka al-mukarrama* (Riyadh: Layan Culture Foundation, 2007); *al-Āthār al-islāmiyya fī makka al-mukarrama* (Riyadh: Dār al-Hilal, 2009); *al-Aḥjār al-shāhidiyya al-maḥfūẓa bi-matḥaf makka al-mukarrama lil-āthār wa-l-turāth (al-majmūʿa al-rābiʿa)* (Riyadh: Saudi Commission for Tourism & National Heritage, 2010).

[54] al-Moraekhi, "*A Critical and Analytical*," 1: 28-63.

[55] Moshalleh K al-Moraekhi "Shāhd qabr suʿād "mustawladat" al-sharīf muḥammad barakāt," *Majallat al-Khalīj lil-Taʾrīkh wa-l-Āthār* 3 (2007): 132-133.

[56] al-Moraekhi, "*A Critical and Analytical*," 1: 38-50.

[57] Saad A. Al-Rashid, *Mudawwnāt khaṭṭiyya ʿalā al-ḥajar min minṭaqat ʿasīr: dirāsa taḥlīliyya wa-muqārana* (Riyadh: Dār al-Waṭan: 2008).

[58] Aḥmad ʿUmar al-Zaylaʿī, "*The Southern Area of the Amirate of Mecca (3rd-7th/9th- 13th centuries), Its History, Archaeology and Epigraphy*" (PhD diss., Durham University,1983).

[59] Khaleel Ibrahim al-Muaikel, "*A Critical study of the Archaeology of The Jawf region of Saudi Arabia with Additional Material on its History and Early Arabic Epigraphy*" (PhD diss., Durham University,1988), 1: 155-228.

Another region that has yielded much epigraphic material is al-ʿUlā.[60] Besides publications by ʿAli Ghabban and al-Kilābī,[61] Jahaz al-Shammarī published Islamic inscriptions originating from sites in Umm-Darj and Abū ʿŪd, in the al-ʿUlā region. Al-Shammarī discovered a total of 25 graffiti from Umm-Darj, and a further 50 graffiti from Abū ʿŪd.[62] Finally, a team of scholars from King Saud University conducted fieldwork in the al-ʿUlā region, and found 450 graffiti in the mountain of al-Aqraʿ. Of these, they only published four dated graffiti, with the promise that the remaining graffiti will soon appear in a book.[63]

The Najrān region has known several missions yielding a number of publications of inscriptions. Starting with the *Expédition Philby- Ryckmans- Lippens* in 1951/52,[64] the area has since then also received a Japanese team.[65] Imbert in 2015 published two graffiti from Najrān[66] which resulted from the activities of a French-Saudi research team.[67] Finally, al-Moraekhi published a number of graffiti from this area.[68]

At the beginning of this century, al-Muʿallā cemetery and its gravestones in Mecca received scholarly attention. The first publication was by al-Zahrānī, who published 100 tombstones.[69] The

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[60] al-ʿUlā is a rich area of inscriptions in different languages, Kootstra, "Scribal practices," 21.

[61] Ghabban, "Fuwayq mawrid," 173-177; al-Kilābī republished what Ghabban published in his article, with additional graffiti, see, for example, al-Kilābī *al-Nuqūsh al-islāmiyya*, 378.

[62] Jahaz B. al-Shammarī, *al-Kitābāt al-islāmiyya fī mawqiʿay umm-daraj wa-abū ʿūd bi-minṭaqat al-ʿulā* (Riyadh: Saudi Commission for Tourism & Antiquities, 2014).

[63] Aḥmad al-ʿUbūdī et al., "Nuqūsh islāmiyya muʾarrakha min jabal al-aqraʿ shamāl muḥāfaẓat al-ʿulā bi-minṭaqat al-madīna al-munawwara," *Majallat Kulliyyat al-Siyāḥa wa-l-Āthār* 29, no. 1 (January 2018): 25-58.

[64] Grohmann, *Expédition Philby- Ryckmans- Lippens.*

[65] Mutsuo Kawatoko et al., *Ancient and Islamic Rock Inscriptions of Southwest Saudi Arabia I Wādī Khushayba* (Tokyo: Middle Eastern Culture Center in Japan, Tokyo University of Foreign Studies, Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, Deputy Ministry of Antiquities and Museums, Ministry of Education, 2005).

[66] Frédéric Imbert, "Annexe – Note épigraphique sur la découverte récente de graffiti arabes mentionnant le calife ʿUmar b. al-Ḫaṭṭāb (Najrân, Arabie Saoudite)," in *Constructing The Seventh Century*, ed. Constantin Zuckerman (Paris: Travaux et Mémoires 17, 2013), 757-758.

[67] Christian Robin et al., "Saudi-French Archaeological Mission Najran Region Fifth Season 2011," Atlal 26 (2018): 161-175.

[68] Moshalleh K. al-Moraekhi, "al-Nuqūsh al-islāmiyya fī jabal al-dharwāʾ najrān," *Dirāsāt āthāriyya silsila ʿilmiyya muḥakkama tuṣdiruhā al-jamʿiyya al-saʿūdiyya lil-dirāsāt al-athariyya* 14 (2019): 14.

[69] ʿAbd al-Raḥmān ibn ʿAlī al-Zahrānī, *Kitābāt islāmiyya min makka al-mukarrama (1-7AH/7-13CE)* (Riyadh: King Faisal Center for Research and Islamic Studies, 2003), 8.

Saudi authority has published the al-Zahrānī editions, with an additional 486 tombstones in a catalogue.[70] Following this, Nāṣir al-Ḥārithī has published three volumes, containing a total of 178 gravestones. Additionally he discussed one more gravestone in an outstanding article, bringing the total of published gravestones from the cemetery to 765.[71] Al-Juhaymī reported in her MA thesis, however, that in total more than 1200 gravestones have been found in this cemetery.[72]

In the desert of the Ḥismā Tabūk region, five new inscriptions dating to the first 50 years of the Hijra have recently come to light. Four of these are dated to well-known historical events (see Appendix One). Al-Saʿīd et al., published these inscriptions editing a total of 237 Arabic graffiti from Ḥismā. Their book, however, unfortunately does not engage with other works on the same area, such as the thesis of Ghabban and the book of al-Anṣārī et al., about al-Bidʿ, in which some of the same published graffiti are included.[73] Maysāʾ Ghabban recently completed her PhD thesis at King Saud University, containing new early Arabic inscriptions from Ḥismā in Tabūk.[74] This thesis contains a total of 250 graffiti, dating back to the 1st-2nd /7th-9th centuries, with four inscriptions dating back to the 1st/7th-8th century.[75] Finally, the area of al-Ḥāʾiṭ, the ancient Fadk, has received some scholarly attention. Al-Samārī published 106 graffiti from this area.[76]

In addition to these volumes specializing in specific areas, some publications have appeared that gather inscriptions from all over the peninsula. In 2015, al-Thenyian published a book on Arabic

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[70] Khalīfa ibn ʿAbd Allāh al-Khalīfa et al., *Aḥjār al-muʿallā al-shāhidiyya bi-makka al-mukarrama* (Riyadh: Wakālat al-Āthār wa-l-Matāḥaf, 2004).

[71] al-Ḥārithī, "Shāhd qabr," 234-250.

[72] Badriyya bt. ʿAbd al-ʿAzīz al-Juhaymī, "*Nuqūsh islāmiyya shāhidiyya li- banī al-ḥasan ibn ʿalī ibn abī ṭālib min maqbarat al-muʿallā bi-makka al-mukarrama*" (M.A thesis, King Saud University,2010), 26.

[73] ʿAbd Allāh ʿAbd al-ʿAzīz al-Saʿīd et al., *Nuqūsh ḥismā: kitābāt min ṣadr al-islām shamāl gharb al-mamlaka* (Riyadh: al-Majalla al-ʿArabiyya, 2017). See ʿAbd al-Raḥmān al-Ṭaīb al-Anṣārī et al., a*l-Bidʿ taʾrīkhuhā wa-āthāruhā* (Riyadh: Wakālat al-Āthār wa-l-Matāḥaf, 2002),58-64.

[74] In total, she found 582 inscriptions, the rest will be published in future research, Maysāʾ Ghabban "*al-Kitābāt al-islāmiyya al-mubakkira*," 56.

[75] Ibid., 740.

[76] Īmān bt. ʿUthmān ibn ʿAbd al-ʿAzīz al-Samārī, "*al-Kitābāt al-islāmiyya al-ṣakhriyya fī muḥāfaẓat al-ḥāʾiṭ bi-minṭaqat ḥāʾil*" (MA thesis, King Saud University, 2018).

inscriptions from the 1st/7th-8th century, found all over Saudi Arabia. Al-Thenyian seems to have relied, however, on older editions. For example, he used part of Hamidullah's work, who had identified two of the Prophet Muḥammad's companions in an inscription, namely ʿUmar and Abū Bakr, dating the inscription to the time of the Prophet.[77] However, since then scholars reread and reanalyzed the inscription and the information was thus outdated when al-Thenyian used it. For example, Ghabban dated the graffito to the time of Abū Bakr (r. 11-13/632-634).[78] Imbert thought the reading was doubtful and it could be read as ʿUmar son of Abū Bakr instead of ʿUmar and Abū Bakr.[79]

Al-Thenyian also included an inscription that has been discovered during a Saudi-Japanese mission,[80] but he misread it. I re-edit the graffito in Part Two (inscription 2.38). In addition, he did not include the inscriptions published by Nāṣir al-Ḥārithī dating to the year 78/697-698,[81] and two inscriptions are only listed without a photograph or even an edition.[82]

There are several publications that bring together early Arabic inscriptions from different areas of the Muslim world, in which those of Arabia constitute one part. First amongst these is Van Berchem and his *Matériaux pour un corpus inscriptionum Arabicarum*.[83] This monumental work contains editions of inscriptions in Arabic, gravestones, constructions' inscriptions and milestones. There are no graffiti included in the book in a systematic way. More recently, Imbert studied

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[77] Hamidullah, "Some Arabic,"427-439.
[78] ʿAli Ibrahim Ghabban, "The evolution of the Arabic script in the period of the Prophet Muḥammad and the Orthodox Caliphs in the light of new inscriptions discovered in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia," in *The Development of Arabic as a Written Language*, in *Supplement to the Proceedings of the Seminar for Arabian Studies* (40), ed. M.C.A. Macdonald (Oxford: Archaeopress, 2010), 97.
[79] Frédéric Imbert, "Califes, princes et compagnons dans les graffiti du début de l'Islam," *Romano-Arabica* 15 (2015): 63.
[80] Mutsuo Kawatoko, "Archaeological Survey," *Atlal* 18 (2005): 45-59.
[81] al-Ḥārithī, "Naqsh kitābī nādir,"533–543.
[82] Mohammad A. al-Thenyian, *Nuqūsh al-qarn al-hijrī al-awwal (al-qarn al-sābiʿ al-mīlādī) al-muʾarrakha fī al-mamlaka al-ʿarabiyya al-saʿūdiyya (dirāsa taḥlīliyya jadīda)* (Riyadh: King Saud University, 2015), 51-52, 57-58.
[83] Van Berchem, *Matériaux pour*.

unedited and edited Arabic inscriptions from the first two Islamic centuries, in his habilitation entitled "*L'Islam des pierres Graffiti arabes des deux premiers siècles de l'Hégire (VIIe–IXe siècles) Corpus et premières analyses*." There, he presented Arabic inscriptions from Saudi Arabia, alongside others from Syria, Iraq, Jordan, Palestine and Lebanon. He selected his inscriptions on the basis of the absolute dates mentioned in them, or by using paleographic criteria to date them to the earliest period.[84] However, he missed two published inscriptions from Saudi Arabia dated to the 1st/7th-8th century in his analysis.[85]

The use of inscriptions for further studies can be divided into three main categories. The first one concerns the production of editions of inscriptions related through the language and script they are written in (Arabic), or the area they were found or the period in which they were produced. These studies overall offer very limited information on the inscriptions. Mostly such discussion is limited to an analysis of the script, language, contents, or archaeological context. They provide an edition of the inscriptions with some rudimentary information on the identification of individuals mentioned in them.[86] Related are the publications gathering dated inscriptions or inscriptions from one limited region.[87] A second segment concerns the development of the Arabic script, preceding the rise of Islam and under Islam, which has been successfully studied through inscriptions from

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[84] Imbert, "*L'Islam des pierres*," 2:30.

[85] al-Ḥārithī, "Naqsh kitābī nādir,"533–543, and Mohammad A. al-Thenyian, "Naqsh ghayl al-manḍaj (al-mabraḥ) al-islāmī al-muʾarrakh bi-sanat 98 AH (716-717 CE) (muḥāfaẓat ẓahrān al-janūb -al-mamlaka al-ʿarabiyya al-saʿūdiyya)," *Adumatu* 9 (January 2004): 59-83.

[86] See for example, al-Rashid, *Kitābāt islāmiyya min makka,* Maysāʾ Ghabban, "*al-Kitābāt al-islāmiyya al-mubakkira*, " 740. Ḥayāt bt. ʿAbd Allāh Ḥusayn al-Kilābī, *al-Nuqūsh al-islāmiyya,* and the same author *al-Āthār al-islāmiyya bi-baldat badā, muḥāfaẓat al-wajh, shamāl gharb al-mamlaka al-ʿarabiyya al-saʿūdiyya* (Riyadh: Saudi Commission for Tourism and Antiquities, 2010).

[87] See for example Saad A. al-Rashid, "Naqsh muʾarrakh min al-ʿaṣr al-umawī majhūl al-mawqiʿ min minṭaqat al-ḥijāz," *Dirāsāt fī al-Āthār* 1 (1992): 265-270; and the same author "Nuqūsh muʾarrakha min al-ṣuwaydira", *Majallat al-Dāra*17, no. 4 (January 1991): 42-58, see also al-Thenyian, "Naqsh ghayl," 59-83.

all over the Peninsula.[88] Inscriptions have also been used to study certain features of the Arabic script itself such as the use of diacritical dots to distinguish between letters.[89]

The third approach, which this thesis also hopes to make a contribution to, uses inscriptions for historiography. The historical studies can be divided into four different categories. First there are the publications that focus on single historical events that are recorded in the inscriptions. Examples are the Zuhayr graffito reporting on the death of the caliph ʿUmar[90] or the inscription recording the rebuilding of the Holy mosque.[91] Related are the publications collecting inscriptions that mention historical figures as discussed below. While such studies make valuable contributions to our understanding of individual historical events, their impact has remained limited. A second way in which inscriptions have been applied in historiography concerns the study of the origins of Islam and the history of the early caliphate. A critical historiographical approach starting amongst European Orientalists in the late 19th century dismissed classical Arabic-Islamic texts as historical sources because they came into existence several centuries after the events which they describe and were composed in very different environments and contexts. Although it was acknowledged that these later texts made ample use of earlier material, it was considered to be impossible to distinguish earlier evidence from later reworkings, additions and corrections. Thus, scholars

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[88] See, for example, Suhayla Yāsīn al-Jubūrī, *Aṣl al-khaṭṭ al-ʿarabī wa-taṭawwurhu ḥattā nihāyat al-ʿaṣr al-umawī* (Baghdad: Maṭbaʿat al-Adīb al-Baghdādī, 1977); Muḥammad Fahd ʿAbd Allāh al-Faʿr, *Taṭawwur al-kiātbāt wa-l-nuqūsh fī al-ḥijāz mundhu fajr al-islām ḥattā muntaṣaf al-qarn al-sābiʿ al-hijrī* (Jeddah: Tihama, 1984). Beatrice Gruendler, *The Development of The Arabic Scripts from the Nabatean Era to the First Islamic Century According to Dated Texts*, (Atlanta/ Georgia: Scholars press, 1993), 89-101, ʿAli ibn Ibrahim Ghabban and Robert Hoyland, "The inscription of Zuhayr, the oldest Islamic inscription (24AH/AD 644-645), the rise of Arabic script and the nature of early Islamic state," *AAE* 19, no. 2 (2008): 209-236. Ghabban, "The evolution", and Laïla Nehmé, "A glimpse of the Development of the Nabataean Script into Arabic Based on Old and New Epigraphic Material," in *The Development of Arabic as a Written Language,* in *Supplement to the Proceedings of the Seminar for Arabian Studies* (40), ed. M.C.A. Macdonald (Oxford: Archaeopress, 2010), 47-88. Al-Shdaifat et al., "An early Christian," 318-319.

[89] Ghabban and Hoyland, "The inscription," 209-236, al-Shdaifat et al., "An early Christian," 318-319.

[90] Ghabban and Hoyland, "The inscription," 213.

[91] al-Ḥārithī, "Naqsh kitābī nādir," 35.

rejected the body of historical Arabic writings in their entirety for the reconstruction of Islam's earliest history.

For the last twenty years or so, however, a generation of scholars have been searching actively for ways to make use of the classical sources, including examining the texts using methods from other academic fields, combining them with documentary materials such as coins, documents and archaeological remains or with sources from outside the Arabic-Islamic historiographical tradition.[92] Inscriptions play an essential role in this new historiographical approach especially in relation to the form and presence of Islam and the Islamic state in early Islamic Arabia.[93]

When looking at the content of the inscriptions, four major themes can be distinguished. First of all Qurʾanic quotations in inscriptions have raised an interest amongst scholars for obvious reasons.[94] A second approach has been to look at a specific writing formula employed in these texts, for example "*jihād* and *shahāda*" holy war and martyrdom.[95] Thirdly, the poetry found in

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[92] For a good overview of the debate, see Fred Donner, *Narratives of Islamic Origins: The Beginnings of Islamic Historical Writing* (Princeton/New Jersey: Darwin,1998), 5-31, For new approaches, see for example Majied Robinson, "*Prosopographical Approaches to the Nasab Tradition: a Study of Marriage and Concubinage in the Tribe of Muḥammad, 500-750CE*" (PhD diss., The University of Edinburgh, 2013), Peter Webb has used literary texts in conjunction with historical ones as well as methodologies from anthropology to re-evaluate Arab identity in pre-Islamic and early Islamic Arabia *Imaging the Arabs: Arab Identity and the Rise of Islam* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2015). Following in the footsteps of Crone/Cook's Hagarism, but drastically extending its source base and thereby coming to different insights, Robert G. Hoyland has collected non-Arabic historiographical witnesses to Islam's rise in *Seeing Islam as Others Saw It: A Survey of Christian, Jewish, and Zoroastrian Writings on Early Islam* (Princeton/New Jersey: Darwin, 1997). For initiatives to use material sources in combination with historical sources, see for example on coins Stefan Heidemann, "Numismatics," In *The New Cambridge History of Islam*, ed. Chase F. Robinson (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010), 1: 648-663; on papyri, for example Petra M. Sijpesteijn, "An Early Umayyad Papyrus Invitation for the Ḥajj," *JNES* 73, no. 2 (2014): 179-190; Jelle Bruning, "A Legal *Sunna* in *Dhikr Ḥaqqs* from Sufyanid Egypt," *Islamic Law and Society* 22, no. 4 (2015): 352-374; on archaeology, for example Jeremy Johns, "Archaeology and the History of Early Islam: The First Seventy Years," *JESHO* 46, no. 4 (2003): 411-436.
[93] Robert G. Hoyland, "New Documentary Texts and the Early Islamic State," *BSOAS* 69, no. 3 (2006): 395-416; and see Ilkka Lindstedt's work. He has used inscriptions to study the religious identity in early Islamic period in his article "Who Is in, Who Is out? Early Muslim Identity through Epigraphy and Theory," *JSAI* 46 (2019):147-247.
[94] Robert Hoyland, "The Content and the Context of Early Arabic Inscriptions", *JSAI* 21 (1997): 77-102; Frédéric Imbert, "Le Coran dans les graffiti des deux premiers siècles de l'Hégire," *Arabica* 47 (2000):384-390.
[95] Ilkka Lindstedt, "Religious warfare and martyrdom in Arabic graffiti (70s-110s AH/690s-730s CE)," in *Scripts and Scripture: Writing and Religion in Arabia, 500–700 CE.,* ed. Fred Donner and Rebecca Hasselbach-Andee (Chicago: Oriental Institute, forthcoming).

the inscriptions has been studied.[96] Finally, scholars have turned to the inscriptions for genealogical and social-historical studies related to prosopography. This thesis can be placed in this last category of research.

The genealogy approach can be divided into two types: the first studies families; and the second studies individuals within those families. Five separate research studies have been conducted on families using these epigraphic records. The first is an article by Aḥmad al-Zaylaʿī. The publication offers new insights into the history of the al-Mūsawiyya family, the descendants of ʿAlī son of Abū Ṭālib, using three gravestones from al-Sirrayn, an archeological site south of Mecca. Two of these were already published in his PhD thesis, but the interesting one is the gravestone for an *amīr* who was not mentioned on the list of al-Sirrayn's governors and which he added.[97] From these tombstones, he was able to identify a member of this family so far unknown in the historical sources. The second article of al-Zaylaʿī discusses the gravestones of the al-ʿUwayd family, namely 12 gravestones from the 3rd/9th to the 6th/12th centuries. Except for one, he had published these inscriptions already in his thesis.[98] Al-Juhaymī's thesis brings together the gravestones of the descendants of al-Ḥasan son of ʿAlī son of Abū Ṭālib discovered in al-Muʿallā cemetery.[99] This thesis is based on 12 tombstones relating to the descendants of al-Ḥasan son of ʿAlī son of Abū Ṭālib.[100] Qashshāsh published inscriptions related to Khālid son of al-ʿĀṣ, his sons and one grandson. This study is based on six graffiti discovered in the al-Bāḥa region in south Saudi Arabia.

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[96] Saad A. al-Rashid, "Qirāʾa jadīda li-naqsh shiʿrī min al-suwārqiyya bi-minṭaqat al-ḥijāz," Kinda 2 (2000):59-72; ʿAbd al-Raḥmān N al-Saʿīd, "al-Nuqūsh al-shiʿriyya al-ṣakhriyya fī al-mamlaka al-ʿarabiyya al-saʿūdiyya wa-qīmatuhā al-adabiyya," *Majallat al-Dāra* 39, no.2 (2013):11-62; the same author "al-Nuqūsh al-shiʿriyya fī kitāb aḥjār al-muʿallā al-shāhidiyya bi-makka al-mukarrama," *Majallat al-Dāra* 43, no. 2 (2017): 65-170.

[97] al-Zaylaʿī, "Aḍwāʾ jadīda," 169-189.

[98] Aḥmad ʿUmar al-Zaylaʿī, "al-Kitābāt al-islāmiyya al-mnuqūsha ʿalā shawāhid qubūr usrat āl ʿuwayd: (ḥukkām ʿasham wa-mikhlāfīhā wa-ahammiyyatuhā fī tadwīn taʾrīkhuhm," *Majallat kulliyat al-Ādāb* 11, no. 2 (1999): 399-450.

[99] al-Juhaymī, "Nuqūsh islāmiyya".

[100] al-Ḥārithī, *al-Aḥjār al-shāhidiyya al-maḥfūẓa*, 196-203.

The study is incredibly useful in determining the importance of these artefacts because it is currently the only graffito known from a companion of the Prophet.[101] Finally, al-Khthimī published 12 inscriptions relating to the Banū Shayba dating from the 2nd/8th centuries to the 8th/14th centuries; all coming from the cemetery of al-Muʿallā.[102] Other publications have focused on individual historical figures attested in the inscriptions. Al-Ḥārithī studied a gravestone from al-Muʿallā cemetery, related to the great-granddaughter of ʿAmr son of al-ʿĀṣ.[103] Imbert studied inscriptions mentioning caliphs and other royal figures.[104] Adi offered information from historical sources about the individuals appearing in a number of published inscriptions from Saudi Arabia.[105]

All these studies are fundamental and important in showing how related material can be brought together. In this dissertation, the corpus used to study some early Muslim families is wider in terms of chronology and geography. Moreover, my approach to the inscriptions combines multidisciplinary methodologies, while the questions I ask go beyond any of the work that has been done so far on the basis of the inscriptions. It is the approach that is followed in this dissertation that we should turn to next.

1.3. Questions, corpus and structure of the dissertation

In the Ḥijāz and the surrounding regions, a significant number of inscriptions have been found that belong to the first and second generation of followers of the Prophet Muḥammad. These have not, however, been studied systematically. The aims of this dissertation are two-fold. The first goal is

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[101] Aḥmad Saʿīd Qashshāsh, *Nuqūsh al-ṣaḥābī al-jalīl khālid ibn al-ʿāṣ wa-abnāʾuhu fī minṭaqat al-bāḥa* (Beirut: Dār al-Intishār al-ʿArabī, 2015), 35-65.
[102] ʿAbīr Saʿīd Fāḍil al-Khathimī, "*Usrat banī shayba min khilāl shawāhid maqbarat al-muʿallā bi-makka al-mukarrama: dirāsa waṣfiyya taḥlīliyya muqārana*" (MA thesis, King Saud University, 2018).
[103] al-Ḥārithī, "Shāhd qabr," 234-250.
[104] Imbert, "Califes, princes," 59-72.
[105] G. Adi, "*Identifying Individuals*".

methodological: I want to show how inscriptions (graffiti, tombstones and constructions inscriptions) can be used as a historical source. Secondly, based on the epigraphic corpus gathered in this dissertation, I want to make some observations concerning the community of Muslims that inhabited Arabia in the first three centuries of Islam's history. The main questions of this thesis are therefore: *what kind of inscriptions* did the members of four families of descendants of the companions of the prophet Muḥammad produce? Who are they? And, by analyzing the answer to the first question: *why* did they leave inscriptions?

In order to answer these questions I provide a coherent corpus of sound editions of the inscriptions related to the members of four families of descendants of the companions of the prophet Muḥammad in Part Two of the dissertation. In the first part I analyze these inscriptions in terms of contents, form and geographical context in relation to each other and to the Arabic narrative sources. I use the epigraphic record together with information from the historical sources to see how they relate and contrast in their records of the genealogical relations of these early Muslims. Using geographical data about the location of the inscriptions, their position in relation to each other and to the natural and built environment I examine how these inscriptions interact with their surroundings. Analyzing the expressions, words and family relations used for self-identification I examine, finally, what these inscriptions tell us about the epigraphic habit in Islamic Arabia.

In order to answer the core research questions of this dissertation, I collected all known inscriptions related to four families belonging to the earliest generations of Muslims. I chose these families because they are all well represented in the epigraphic and the literary corpus, and played an important role in the earliest history of Islam. The four families whose inscriptions are discussed in the dissertation are organized as follows:

Inscriptions 1.1-9: The descendants of al-Mughīra al-Makhzūmī.

Inscriptions 2.1-138: The descendants of ʿUmar son of al-Khaṭṭāb.

Inscriptions 3.1-89: The descendants of al-Zubayr son of al-ʿAwwām.

Inscriptions 4.1-24: The descendants of Abū ʿAbs.

In this dissertation, I have included published and unpublished inscriptions. I have found the published material by systematically surveying published editions, including unpublished PhD and MA theses. I have examined each edited text using either a photograph of the inscription or the original inscription if I could gain access to it during my fieldwork for which I was granted permission by the Saudi Commission for Tourism and National Heritage. A list of corrections of edited texts appears in Appendix Two. In Part Two I include all the inscriptions that I will use in this dissertation published and unpublished alike. Most of the material has been gathered during fieldwork, which I carried out in Medina in 2017 and 2018. Additionally, I used one graffito that was given to me after it was discovered during fieldwork caried out under the supervision of the Saudi Commission for Tourism and National Heritage; another inscription was shared with me by the owner of the private museum in Khaybar called the *Matḥaf Khaybar li-Turāth al-Ābā wa-l-Ajdād.* Three unpublished inscriptions I retrieved from references in al-Rashid's book *al-Ṣuwaydira (al-ṭaraf qadīman)* (one inscription),[106] and the book of al-Saʿīd et al., *Nuqūsh ḥismā* (two inscriptions).[107] Sixteen more inscriptions were given to me by two famous social media users namely: Mohammed Almoghathawi (@mohammed93athar) who gave me fourteen graffiti and Farīq al-Ṣaḥrāʾ who provided me with two inscriptions.

In total, the corpus consists of 260 inscriptions, related to 106 persons (for an overview of the inscriptions related to each individual, see Appendix Three and Part Two). There are 15

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[106] al-Rashid, *al-Ṣuwaydira (al-ṭaraf qadīman)*, 152.
[107] al-Saʿīd et al., *Nuqūsh ḥismā*, 14 and 232.

gravestones or epitaphs, and one construction inscription. All of the gravestones have been previously published as indicated in the editions. The majority of the inscriptions, however, are graffiti, namely, 244.

The corpus can be divided into three categories. First there are the inscriptions that were previously published and which have been included here according to their previous publication. This concerns 93 inscriptions. The second category contains texts that I re-edit here due to the fact that the *editio princeps* was incorrect for one or more reasons; for example, because one of the names, the *nisba*, or a date was read incorrectly. This concerns 21 graffiti and one tombstone. Finally, new material consisting of 145 graffiti is included as well.

The first step in identifying members of these above-mentioned families in the inscriptions is through their names. Establishing the name of the individuals mentioned in the inscriptions, identifying them with a member of one of the families and connecting them to a historical record in the narrative sources entails several steps. The first step is to obtain the correct reading of the names in the inscriptions. Indeed, the reading of inscriptions, even though they might only consist of a short text, has led to long academic discussions (see for example in Part Two the re-editions of inscriptions 1.9 and 2.135). Even when the names are correctly read, however, it is sometimes difficult to establish an individual's lineage. Not all inscriptions contain a *nisba* or other unambiguous identity markers. By reading inscriptions relating to one family on one site it is, however, possible to link a specific individual who appears without his full lineage to related individuals. It seems that family members had often added their names to places where some of their ancestors or contemporary relatives had placed their name. So, even though most individuals in our corpus of inscriptions omitted their last name (*nisba*) or other identity markers, when comparing them with the inscriptions appearing nearby it was possible to identify them as

members of the same family, see for example Chapter Two, section 2.2.1. Interestingly, some individuals who have left several inscriptions do not use the same (list of) names and other identifiers in each text. In other words, in one text they might use their name and the name of their father only, while in another place they use several names in addition. This is further discussed in Chapter Five. The families that are studied in the dissertation belong all to the higher social classes because of their famous ancestor(s). Descendants of important figures often also obtained dominant positions in society as governors, judges, etc., as we know from a variety of sources. At the same time, not all members of these families, which could indeed be rather extensive, were equally placed at the same high social status. Those less historically remarkable family members could still leave their names in a graffito. Their gravestone might have been preserved, or they were mentioned in other texts.

The starting point of the dissertation is the epigraphic record. The point of the thesis is to examine what was written down on stone, related to the members of the families mentioned above. This is why the inscriptions, the information contained in them, and their relation to their archaeological, geographical, and epigraphic context form the basis on which the analysis stands. The literary sources provide additional information about the people mentioned in the inscriptions and the conditions provided by the inscriptions.

This dissertation combines different disciplines and their related methodologies. Epigraphy is applied to read the inscriptions correctly. The results of this are the editions that form Part Two of the dissertation. In my editions I followed methods developed by epigraphists, papyrologists and other document editors indicating unclear or unreadable letters and passages, lacunae in the text and possible solutions thereof and miswritings with a set of standardized special characters (see note on editions, and transliterations) in my editions.

As an organizing tool, the dissertation makes use of *prosopography*. Recent works in Islamic studies have successfully made use of the Arabic literary sources for prosopography studies.[108] But what does prosopography mean in this dissertation? Asad Ahmed provides the following definition" prosopography, [is] defined as the study of individuals insofar as they belong to groups, falls back generally on two genres in the Arabo-Islamic tradition: compilations of notices on individuals classed into any number of categories ranging from wise men and philosophers to transmitters of Prophetic Sayings and legal scholars (generally the *Ṭabaqāt* genre); and genealogies that generally had their roots in tribal sociopolitics (*Kutub al-ansāb*)."[109] Prosopography is taken here to mean the collective study of a group of historical actors. Indeed, my first step was to gather information about the individuals belonging to the four families under study and who appear in inscriptions in all historical sources available to me extending over ten generations. The results of these findings are presented in Chapter Three. Next, I compared the information from the epigraphic with the narrative record to analyze any differences in these two types of historical records. This led to Chapter Four where I focused on those individuals who are attested in the epigraphic record but who are missing from the narrative sources, trying to explain the discrepancy in historical written memory of these individuals.

Here, it is worth mentioning that the study of genealogy has not received adequate attention in the field of Arabic epigraphy, contrary to historical studies that have been the topic of great interest over the last twenty years. For example, in this regard, the relevant publications are limited to a small number of inscriptions. In addition, scholars usually focus on the elite, who held high positions during their lifetime. Moreover, this type of work only focuses on the findings in one

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[108] See Asad Q. Ahmed, *The Religious Elite of the Early Islamic Ḥijāz: Five Prosopographical case studies* (Oxford: Linacre College Unit for Prosopographical Research, 2011); Robinson, "*Prosopographical Approaches*".
[109] Ahmed, *The Religious*, 3-4.

area or one cemetery, without looking for the other related family members. For example, the study

of Banī Shayba was limited to the findings about this family in the cemetery at Mecca.[110] However,

three further inscriptions about this family have been found in the region of Mecca outside the

cemetery and were published already 23 years ago.[111]

Methods from archaeology were applied when examining the inscriptions in the context of their

geographical and built environment during fieldwork trips. In 2017 I visited the sites Muzj

Ruwāwa, Khfiya al-Bardiya and Al-Ṣuwaydira. In 2018 I visited Muzj, Ruwāwa, Khfiya, Ṭarīq

al-Ḥamāṭ and Jabal al-Makaymin. Information about the use of the environment (for husbandry

such as grazing, agricultural or religious activities, such as the *ḥajj*,) was used to explain the

presence of inscriptions. Natural surroundings such as the presence of (seasonal) water ways, as

well as man-built structures such as wells and roads were included in the description of the location

of the inscriptions to understand better their presence and location.

Historical methods were applied in different ways. When gathering information from Arabic

narrative sources (about places and people) I used historiographical methods to evaluate the

historical references. I turned to socio-history in the last chapter of the dissertation, where I use

the ways in which individuals identified themselves in their inscriptions for a better understanding

of the society that produced these inscriptions. I also applied the concept of the epigraphic habitus

originally developed by classical historians to examine *why* these people left inscriptions.

This dissertation is divided into two parts. Part Two consists of an edition of the texts that the

dissertation is based on. Part One aims to show how inscriptions, when grouped in meaningful

ways and read not in isolation but in combination with their environment, can be used as a source

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[110] al-Khathimī, "*Usrat banī Shayba*," 3-4.
[111] al-Rashid, *Kitābāt islāmiyya min makka*, 111, 142 and 159.

for history writing. This introduction in Chapter One, tried to provide an overview of the history of the field of Arabic epigraphy. It also discussed the main research questions of the dissertations and the applied methodologies.

Chapter Two traces the steps of identifying the inscriptions that form the corpus under study. It discusses the criteria and methods that were applied to select the materials. I also provide a geographical overview of where the inscriptions can be found, and how the corpus can be dated.

In Chapter Three I discuss the four families of descendants of the companions of the prophet Muḥammad combining information from the narrative sources and the inscriptions. I only discuss here those family members who are attested in the inscriptions, only discussing the most famous ancestors or founders of the families. In Chapter Three I also introduce the literary sources providing information on the individual family members from biographical dictionaries, chronicles and other narrative sources. I discuss the discrepancies between the narrative sources and epigraphic records and show where the two types of sources overlap.

Chapter Four builds on the above information, but focusses on the individuals who are attested in the inscriptions but who do not appear in the historical record as preserved in narrative sources. In this chapter we will discuss and try to explain how this discrepancy between the graffiti and the historical narrative sources could have come into existence.

Chapter Five stands apart as I use the information from the inscriptions themselves and their surroundings to answer the question of how people gave shape to the words they left chiseled in stone and thus to understand *why* they left inscriptions. To this aim I focus first on the contents of the inscriptions. I examine the words and expressions used, including references to literary and religious texts as well as the letter shapes and writing. A second area of examination are the ways in which the individuals in the inscriptions identified themselves: what ancestors did they list, did

they use *laqab*'s "epithet" or first names, titles or other identity markers? Finally, I look at the inscriptions in relation to their environment: where were the inscriptions placed on the rocks or stones that they appear on, where were the rocks located and what other inscriptions appear nearby?

 In the conclusion I combine the information from the different chapters and discuss what this information tells us about the society of Muslims living in Arabia in the early Islamic period. I also revisit the question of how these inscriptions can be used to answer questions about history.